

Developing a Summer Reading Program Marketing Plan

1. Begin the marketing process by examining your library's mission and purpose.

Why do you offer a Summer Reading Program? How does your Summer Reading Program fit into your library's mission to serve the community?

2. Assess library capabilities with a marketing audit (SWOT Analysis):

- Strengths
- Weaknesses
- Opportunities
- Threats

By looking at your library's internal strengths and weaknesses as well as external opportunities and threats, you can capitalize on assets to address deficits and competition. In other words, use your strengths and opportunities to overcome your challenges.

Sample Summer Reading Program SWOT Analysis

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Committed, trained youth staff • Strong community partners • Good return rate for SRP participants • Friends willing to support SRP • Good program attendance 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not enough staff • Not enough money to offer quality prizes • Clerical staff sees SRP as "more work." • No outreach program or staff. • Budget cut for paid performances • SRP participation numbers have not grown in past five years • Lack of SRP program space at some branches
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Early Literacy" is hot topic in our community • Strong Teen Advisory Group: willing to help out with registration/programs • Volunteers • Businesses willing to sponsor SRP in exchange for access to their target customers • Nearby libraries 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bookstores offering SRP, with books as prizes • Nearby libraries • Schools offering SRP • Cultural institutions offering summer "camps" • Competition for children's time (TV, computers, other community events) • Perception that SRP is "passé"

3. Find out what services your users want and how they perceive the library.

What do your summer reading program participants (and parents) think of your program? What do non-participants think?

Five simple ways to gather market research:

- Ask participants to fill out a simple evaluation form ... and then hand them their final prize!
- Hold a teen focus group. Include teens who don't currently participate in the program. Offer food and small prizes for participating.
- Host a poll or survey on your web page. Even one or two questions can be fun.
- Listen! Ask people what they think about the program and jot down their answers.
- Ask your staff what comments they heard (or overheard!) from patrons.

4. Develop goals and objectives based on what your customers want.

Goals should be realistic, specific and measurable. For example, your goal could be to hold an annual summer reading program kick-off event. Your objective would be to attract 100 people to the event. Another objective would be to have 75 attendees at the event sign up for the summer reading program.

5. Select strategies to promote the SRP that are affordable, reach your customers, and will best meet your goal.

Staff, signage, displays, exhibits, publications and presentations are all effective methods of promoting your Summer Reading Program. Be creative. You don't have to have a lot of money to develop a really fun display or presentation.

6. Create a plan of action that describes all the steps needed to carry out the strategies for meeting goals.

Include details of the program, timelines, budget, and assignment of tasks.

7. Evaluate how well you have done.

Did you meet your goals? What worked and what didn't work? What would you do differently? Methods of evaluation include staff and patron surveys, focus groups, statistical analysis of participation/program attendance, etc. Use your evaluation results to develop a new marketing plan for next year's summer reading program.

**Kent District Library
Summer Reading Program
Marketing Strategies**

Newspapers: Media kits will be sent to all daily and weekly papers in the service area. News releases about each KDL summer program will be sent to media contacts. A feature story will be pitched to the *Grand Rapids Press* before the event, and the media will be invited to attend Summer Reading Program kickoffs and events for real-time reporting. KDL will work with the advertising department of Grand Rapids Press to develop a special pull-out advertising section to be published at the end of May, called "Summer Family Fun Guide" which will prominently feature KDL summer programs. A follow-up news release will be sent in September reporting the number of participants in the programs. (May)

Radio: Our regular radio advertisements will highlight the Summer Reading Program during the months of May and June. The monthly WGVU radio interview will also feature the Summer Reading Program, and on-air interviews will be secured with local morning-drive radio programs. Radio spots targeted to the Hispanic community will air on WNWZ. (May/June)

Television: KDL will work with WOOD-TV8 to promote Summer Reading Programs throughout Lakeland Library Cooperative. (February-May)

Cable: Local cable television community awareness programs will be contacted re: feature opportunities highlighting the Summer Reading Program. (April/May)

Direct Mail/Newspapers: The June 2005 "Library Ledger" will feature the Summer Reading Program. This collateral is included in the *Advance*, and reaches over 190,000 households. Postcards highlighting teen summer events will be sent to past Teen Reading Raffle participants. (April)

Kent County Schools: 3,000 fliers will be distributed to children in targeted elementary schools. (Early June)

Internet: The Summer Reading Program will be featured on the KDL Web page. The Teen Page will include online registration and online surveys. Information about the Summer Reading Program will be sent to the Grand Rapids Homeschool Connections Web site, and to the Kent Intermediate School District Web site. (June/July)

Email: A PDF of the Teen Reading Raffle postcard will be sent to all past participants in the Teen Summer Reading Program via email. (Early June)

Magazines: The *Grand Rapids Family Magazine* and *Bookpage* issues will feature the Summer Reading Program. (June)

In House Publicity: Posters, fliers, and bookmarks will be available at all 18 branches of KDL. All Summer Reading Program events are included in branch event calendars, and on the system-wide calendar. Thematic displays in each branch will provide a visual enticement to join the summer reading program. (May-August)

School Promotions: Branch youth staff will be encouraged to arrange school presentations at area elementary schools, as staffing levels allow (May).

Newsletters: KDL will send information about the Summer Reading Program to municipalities for use in their newsletters. Fliers will be sent to Head Start, Bright Beginnings, and 4Cs programs throughout Kent County. Information will be published in the Kent County Literacy Council newsletter for students. (May)

Internal Communication: The Summer Reading Program will be reviewed at the All-Youth Staff Meeting. Youth Staff are encouraged to talk up the program at branch staff meetings. Summer Reading Program will be featured in the KDL Internal Newsletter for all staff. (May)

25 Ideas

For Advertising Your Summer Reading Program

1. Get your local pizza parlor to tape a Teen SRP flyer to the top of every delivery pizza box (teens eat lots of pizza!).
2. Make plastic “cling” certificates on your photocopier (“We Support the ABC Public Library Summer Reading Program”), and ask that local businesses stick them on their windows.
3. Make big banners and fly them outside your library announcing the Summer Reading Program.
4. Ask schools to make SRP announcements on their school announcement systems.
5. Think of all the agencies and organizations in your town who serve children. Ask them to put an announcement in their newsletters. If you have a “Read to Me” program for very young children, consider contacting daycare facilities through your local 4Cs.
6. Ask local businesses who have lots of teen customers if you can put up flyers about your teen summer reading program. (Coffee houses, laser tag facilities, skateboard stores, etc.)
7. Make a visual statement in your library. For every participant (or every 2 hours a kid reads) add a paper “scale” to a dragon and see how long he grows.
8. Use peer pressure. Have each participant sign an “I Joined the Summer Reading Program” card or cut-out shape with their name (first name, last initial only for safety sake). Post them on a bulletin board, or hang from the ceiling. When they see all the other kids who have joined the summer reading program, they will want to join too!
9. Send a list of all your summer reading program completers to your local school principal(s). Ask them to honor the completers at a back-to-school assembly or post their names in the school newsletter. Warning: Make sure you don’t leave any completers off the list!
10. Hold a poster contest at a local school to advertise the summer reading program.
11. Ask high school art teachers if their students could develop art (bulletin boards, window paintings, paper mache, etc.) to help decorate the library based on the SRP theme. Don’t forget your alternative high schools.
12. Ask your teen advisory group to tape a summer reading program promotional skit that could be shown on your local cable channel.
13. Develop a summer reading program day-care kit for day care providers who can’t bring their children to the library.
14. Contact your local movie theater or IMAX. They sometimes give away free advertising on their big screen.
15. Ask for email addresses when registering teens for this year’s program. Develop an email database to send them info on future teen programs at the library.
16. Ask staff to wear “Ask me about the Summer Reading Program” buttons.
17. Try to get one really great prize to raffle off (a bike, a \$50 gift certificate to the mall, etc.) Newspapers are more likely to write an article about a big prize than a lot of little ones.
18. Have teens read aloud, perform reader’s theater or do a puppet show for younger kids. They will bring in their friends, parents, and family as well as provide a free program for the library.

19. Reward parents for signing their kids up for summer reading club. Chocolate is good!
20. Rent or buy a costume character. Feature your character in community parades, picnics, sports events, etc. KDL's character is an elephant named "Katie L."
21. Hold a Summer Reading Program Medieval Fest as a kick-off event. Ask a local theater if they have costumes you could borrow.
22. Partner with local arts and cultural organizations. Offer to train an area museum's volunteers to do effective storytimes at their museum, in return for free admission coupons to give away as summer reading program prizes.
23. Hold a staff contest to see who can sign up the most kids for the summer reading program. Reward them with a day off, or a gift certificate to a local restaurant. If you have multiple branches, reward every library branch that increases its summer reading participation with a plateful of home-baked brownies.
24. Ask local celebrities (mayor/school principals/board members) to act as judges for your library castle-building contest (or pet show, or other contest). Take pictures and include them in your next annual report.
25. After summer is over, hold a "Back-to-School" celebration for staff. You know they are happy to have all those kids back in school!

Web Resources on Marketing

Marketing the Library: Web-based training for public libraries.

www.olc.org/marketing/

Six self-paced library marketing training modules. Links to marketing resources, examples, quizzes, and exercises.

State Library of Ohio Toolkit: Marketing

http://winslo.state.oh.us/services/LPD/tk_market.html

A list of books and websites on marketing.

Library Media and PR

www.ssdesign.com/librarypr/

Strategies, techniques, resources, tips, and tools for library communicators.

NSLS Library Marketing Center

<http://www.nsls.info/marketing/>

Websites, books, and articles on marketing from the North Suburban Library System in Illinois.

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